THE DAILY BREAD

The Fiat of the Beloved



Trusting the Church When It Is Hard

A FORMATION BOOK BY

Kendall Peterson

The Everyday Apostle

THE DAILY BREAD

Fiat of the Beloved

Trusting the Church When It Is Hard

Holding On When a Teaching Costs You

✦ ✦ ✦

A Daily Bread Formation Book

The Everyday Apostle

INTRODUCTION

When the Teaching Is Hard

Sooner or later, every woman who takes her faith seriously meets a teaching of the Church that is hard, a teaching that costs her something, that the surrounding culture rejects, that she herself finds difficult to accept or to live. It may be a teaching on marriage, on sexuality, on the openness of marriage to life, on the dignity of every human life, on forgiveness, on some demand that cuts against her desires or her circumstances or the loud convictions of the world around her. And in that moment, a woman faces a real choice, not an abstract question about authority but a concrete decision about whether she will trust the Church when trusting costs her something.

This book is about that moment and that choice. It is not mainly about the theology of the Church's authority, the reasons she teaches with authority at all, but about the practical, lived question that follows: how a woman actually holds on to the Church's teaching when it is hard, how she meets a difficult teaching with honesty rather than either rejection or mere grudging compliance, how she works through the struggle to a real and peaceful trust. It names honestly the quiet temptation that hard teachings bring, and it shows a way through, a way of trusting the Church that is neither blind nor selective but honest, faithful, and ultimately freeing.

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. — John 6:68

When many turned away from a hard teaching of Jesus, Peter stayed, not because he fully understood but because he had come to trust the One who taught, saying, Lord, to whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life. This book walks through what trusting the Church when it is hard actually looks like: facing the moment when a teaching costs; recognizing the quiet temptation of a selective faith; learning that honest questions are not rejection; trusting before fully understanding; seeking to understand the teaching; practicing obedience while the heart still struggles; and discovering the freedom that waits on the other side of trust. A woman will meet hard teachings, and this book is about how to hold on when she does.

CHAPTER ONE

When a Teaching Costs You

The Moment of the Hard Saying

The real test of a woman's relationship with the Church's authority comes not when a teaching is easy and agreeable but when a teaching is hard, when it costs her something, cuts against her desires, or sets her against the culture she lives in. As long as the Church teaches what a woman already believes and wants, there is no test of trust, but when a hard teaching arrives, one that demands something costly, the question becomes real, and how she meets that moment reveals and shapes her whole relationship with the Church. Understanding the moment when a teaching costs, the moment of the hard saying, prepares a woman to meet it well.

This is a hard saying; who can listen to it? — John 6:60

The Easy Teachings Test Nothing

A woman's trust in the Church is not tested by the teachings she already agrees with, for accepting what one already believes requires no trust, and so the easy teachings reveal nothing about whether she truly receives the Church's authority. It is natural and effortless to accept the Church's teaching when it aligns with a woman's own convictions, her preferences, and the surrounding culture, but this acceptance is not really a reception of the Church's authority, for she is simply agreeing with what she already thought, and no trust is required where there is no cost. This means the easy teachings test nothing, revealing only that a woman agrees with the Church where she happens to agree, which is not the same as trusting the Church's authority, and the real question of trust waits for the teaching that does not come easily. The woman who understands that the easy teachings test nothing knows that her real relationship with the Church's authority is revealed only when a teaching costs her something. The easy teachings test nothing, for accepting what one already believes requires no trust, so a woman's reception of the Church's authority is not revealed by the teachings she agrees with but by how she meets the ones that cost her something.

The Hard Teaching Reveals the Heart

When a hard teaching arrives, one that costs something, it reveals the true state of a woman's trust, showing whether she receives the Church's authority or only her own agreement, and so the hard teaching is a moment of truth. The hard saying, the teaching a woman finds difficult, costly, or countercultural, brings her to a real choice that the easy teachings never forced, the choice whether she will trust the Church's authority even here, even where it costs, or whether her acceptance of the Church extends only as far as her own agreement. This moment reveals the heart, showing whether a woman's faith rests on the Church's authority or on her own judgment dressed in Catholic clothing, and it is in meeting the hard teaching, not the easy one, that the real nature of her trust comes

to light. The woman who understands that the hard teaching reveals the heart meets it knowing that here, where it costs, her real relationship with the Church's authority is being shown. The hard teaching reveals the heart, bringing a woman to the real choice whether she trusts the Church's authority even where it costs or only where she already agrees, so that it is the costly teaching, not the easy one, that shows the true state of her trust.

A Moment to Meet Well

The moment a hard teaching arrives is not a disaster to be feared but an opportunity to meet well, a chance to deepen trust and grow in faith, so that a woman can approach the hard teaching not with dread but as a moment that can strengthen her. When a hard teaching comes, a woman may feel distress, resistance, or fear, but the moment need not be a crisis that damages her faith, for met well it can deepen her trust, mature her relationship with the Church, and strengthen her faith, turning the difficulty into growth. This means a woman can meet the hard teaching not as a threat but as an opportunity, approaching it with the intention of working through it faithfully, so that the moment that tests her trust becomes the moment that deepens it. The woman who sees the hard teaching as a moment to meet well approaches it with hope rather than dread, ready to let the difficulty deepen her trust rather than break it. A moment to meet well is what the arrival of a hard teaching can be, not a disaster to be feared but an opportunity to deepen trust and grow in faith, so that a woman meets it with the intention of working through it faithfully rather than with dread.

CHAPTER TWO

The Quiet Temptation

Keeping the Parts You Like

When a teaching is hard, there is a particular temptation that women often face, not the open and defiant rejection of the Church's authority but a quieter thing, a selective faith that keeps the parts she likes and quietly sets aside the parts that cost her something. This selective faith is subtle precisely because it is quiet, not a dramatic break with the Church but a gentle picking and choosing that leaves a woman feeling faithful while she has in fact made herself the final authority over which teachings to receive. Recognizing this quiet temptation of selective faith is the first step to resisting it.

He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. — James 1:8

Not Defiance but Quiet Selection

The temptation that hard teachings bring to women is often not open defiance, a loud rejection of the Church, but a quiet selection, a gentle setting aside of the hard teachings while keeping the rest, done so softly that it hardly feels like rejection at all. Where open defiance announces itself and is easily recognized, quiet selection slips in unnoticed, a woman simply not thinking much about the teachings she finds hard, quietly not receiving them, keeping the faith she likes while softly setting aside the parts that cost, all without any dramatic break or any sense of rebellion. This quiet selection is more dangerous than open defiance precisely because it is quiet, for it does not feel like rejecting the Church, and a woman can practice it for years while believing herself faithful, having gently made herself the judge of which teachings to accept. The woman who recognizes the temptation as quiet selection rather than open defiance can see it in herself where she might otherwise miss it, hidden as it is beneath a feeling of faithfulness. Not defiance but quiet selection is the particular temptation hard teachings bring, a gentle setting aside of the costly teachings while keeping the rest, done so softly that it hardly feels like rejection, which makes it more dangerous than open defiance.

Making Yourself the Authority

The quiet selection of which teachings to accept, however gentle it feels, makes a woman herself the final authority over the faith, judging the Church's teachings by her own preferences rather than receiving them on the Church's authority. When a woman keeps the teachings she likes and sets aside the ones she finds hard, she has, whether she notices it or not, made her own judgment the measure of the faith, accepting the Church's teaching only where it agrees with her and reserving to herself the final say over what to believe. This means selective faith, for all its quietness, is at bottom a claiming of authority over the Church, a making of oneself the judge, so that a woman who picks and chooses is no longer receiving the faith on the Church's authority but constructing her own faith from the parts she approves. The woman who sees that selective faith makes her the authority recognizes that the quiet picking and choosing, however faithful it feels, has set her own judgment above the Church's. Making yourself the authority is what selective faith does beneath its quiet surface, judging the Church's teachings by one's own preferences rather than receiving them on the Church's authority, so that the woman who picks and chooses has made her own judgment the measure of the faith.

The Instability of a Divided Faith

A selective faith, keeping some teachings and setting aside others by one's own preference, is an unstable and divided faith, for it has no firm ground beneath it, resting

finally on the shifting sands of a woman's own changing judgment rather than on the Church's authority. The Scripture warns that the double-minded are unstable in all their ways, and a selective faith is double-minded, trusting the Church here and oneself there, and such a faith has no solid foundation, for it rests ultimately on a woman's own preferences, which shift with the seasons of her life and the pressures of the culture. This means selective faith does not give a woman the security she seeks but leaves her faith divided and unstable, founded on her own changing judgment rather than on the firm ground of the Church's authority, vulnerable to every shift in her feelings and her circumstances. The woman who sees the instability of a divided faith understands that keeping only the teachings she likes leaves her without firm ground, her faith resting on nothing surer than her own preferences. The instability of a divided faith is the cost of selective faith, for keeping some teachings and setting aside others by one's own preference leaves a woman's faith resting on her own shifting judgment rather than on the Church's authority, divided and without firm ground.

CHAPTER THREE

Honest Questions Are Not Rejection

You Are Allowed to Struggle

A woman meeting a hard teaching may fear that her difficulty, her questions, her struggle to accept it, are themselves a failure of faith, but this is not so, for honest questions are not rejection, and a woman is allowed to struggle with a teaching while still receiving it in faith. There is a crucial difference between the honest wrestling of a believer seeking to understand and the refusal of one who will not receive, and understanding that honest questions are not rejection frees a woman to bring her real struggles to a hard teaching without fearing that the struggle itself is unfaithful.

I believe; help my unbelief! — Mark 9:24

Struggle Within Faith

A woman can struggle with a teaching, find it hard, wrestle with it, and ask honest questions, all while remaining within faith, for the struggle of a believer seeking to understand is itself an act of faith, not a departure from it. The man in the Gospel who cried, I believe, help my unbelief, shows that faith and struggle can coexist, that a person can genuinely believe and still wrestle, still have unbelief to overcome, still ask for help in believing, and this struggle within faith is not a failure but the honest condition of a believer working through a difficulty. This means a woman who struggles with a hard

teaching, who finds it difficult and wrestles with it, is not thereby faithless, for her struggle can be the wrestling of a believer within faith, seeking to receive what she finds hard, and this honest struggle is permitted and even healthy. The woman who understands struggle within faith can bring her real difficulties to a hard teaching without fearing that the struggle makes her unfaithful. Struggle within faith is the honest condition of a believer working through a difficulty, as the man who cried I believe, help my unbelief, shows, so that a woman can wrestle with a hard teaching and ask honest questions while remaining within faith, her struggle an act of faith rather than a departure from it.

Seeking Understanding, Not Refusing

The honest struggle of faith is marked by seeking to understand and receive the teaching, which is wholly different from the refusal that has decided not to receive it, and this difference, not the mere presence of difficulty, is what distinguishes faithful wrestling from rejection. Both the believer wrestling with a hard teaching and the one rejecting it may feel difficulty, but their postures are opposite, for the believer seeks to understand and to receive, bringing her questions in order to work toward acceptance, while the one rejecting has already decided not to receive and uses her questions to justify that refusal. This means the test of whether a woman's struggle is faithful is not whether she finds the teaching hard, for faithful people do, but whether she is seeking to understand and receive it or has decided to refuse it, and honest questions aimed at understanding are the mark of faith, not of rejection. The woman who understands the difference between seeking understanding and refusing can struggle honestly, bringing her questions in the posture of one who seeks to receive rather than one who has decided to refuse. Seeking understanding, not refusing, is what distinguishes faithful struggle from rejection, for the believer brings her questions in order to understand and receive the teaching while the one rejecting uses questions to justify a refusal already decided, so that the posture, not the difficulty, marks the difference.

Bringing Your Questions to God and the Church

A woman with honest questions about a hard teaching should bring them, not bury them, taking them to God in prayer and to the Church's teaching and wisdom, seeking the understanding she lacks rather than either suppressing the questions or letting them fester into rejection. Honest questions are not to be hidden in shame nor nursed in private until they harden into refusal, but brought into the open, carried to God in prayer, taken to the Church's teaching, her catechism, her thinkers, her wise guides, so that a woman seeks real answers to her real questions and works toward understanding. This bringing of questions is the healthy path, for it treats the questions as something to be

worked through toward understanding rather than as grounds for rejection, and it opens a woman to the answers that the Church's rich tradition often holds for exactly the questions she carries. The woman who brings her questions to God and the Church seeks understanding honestly, working through her difficulties toward acceptance rather than suppressing or nursing them. Bringing your questions to God and the Church is the healthy path for honest difficulty, carrying them to prayer and to the Church's teaching to seek real answers, so that a woman works through her questions toward understanding rather than suppressing them or letting them harden into rejection.

CHAPTER FOUR

Trusting Before You Fully Understand

Acting on Trust You Have Reason to Give

Sometimes a woman will not fully understand a hard teaching, will not see all the reasons, will not have her every question answered, and in such cases she is called to trust before she fully understands, to receive the teaching on the trustworthy authority of the Church even while her own understanding is incomplete. This trust before full understanding is not blind, for it rests on good reasons to trust the Church, and learning to act on such trust, as one trusts a doctor or any trustworthy authority, is essential to holding on when a teaching is hard.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. — Proverbs 3:5

You Will Not Always See It Fully

A woman will not always fully understand a hard teaching, for some truths are deep, some reasons are subtle, and her own understanding is limited, so she must be prepared sometimes to receive a teaching she does not yet fully grasp. It would be unrealistic to expect that a woman will fully understand and feel the rightness of every teaching before receiving it, for some teachings touch depths her understanding cannot yet reach, some reasons require more knowledge or maturity than she has, and some truths are simply beyond full comprehension in this life, so that she will sometimes face a teaching she cannot fully see. This means a woman must be ready to receive some teachings on trust, not because she understands them fully but because she trusts the authority that gives them, acknowledging the limits of her own understanding rather than making it the measure of what she will accept. The woman who accepts that she will not always see it fully is freed from the impossible demand that she understand everything before

receiving it, able instead to trust where her understanding falls short. You will not always see it fully, for some truths are deep and a woman's understanding is limited, so she must be prepared to receive some teachings on trust rather than making her own incomplete understanding the measure of what she will accept.

Trust Resting on Good Reasons

The trust that receives a teaching before fully understanding it is not blind but reasoned, resting on the good reasons a woman has to trust the Church's authority, so that she extends to a particular hard teaching the trust she has already found the Church's authority to deserve. A woman does not trust the Church blindly but has reasons to trust her, the authority Christ gave her and the Spirit's promise to protect her, and once she has found these reasons sound, she can reasonably extend that trust to a particular teaching she does not fully understand, trusting the trustworthy authority even where her own understanding fails. This is like trusting a doctor whose competence one has reason to credit, accepting a diagnosis one cannot fully evaluate oneself because one trusts the doctor, and so a woman receives a hard teaching she cannot fully see because she trusts the Church she has good reason to trust. The woman whose trust rests on good reasons receives a hard teaching not blindly but reasonably, extending to it the trust the Church's authority has earned. Trust resting on good reasons is what receives a teaching before fully understanding it, not blind trust but the reasonable extension of trust a woman has already found the Church's authority to deserve, so that she accepts a hard teaching as she would accept a trusted doctor's diagnosis she cannot fully evaluate.

Not Leaning on Your Own Understanding Alone

To trust before fully understanding is to refuse to lean on one's own understanding alone, to recognize that a woman's individual judgment is not the only or the final measure of truth, and to trust an authority wiser and more protected than her own mind. The Scripture counsels not leaning on one's own understanding, and this wisdom applies to receiving the Church's teaching, for a woman who makes her own understanding the sole measure of what she will accept has set her limited, individual judgment above the Church's authority and the Spirit's protection, leaning on herself alone. To trust before fully understanding is to refuse this, to recognize that her own understanding is not the final word, and to trust the Church's authority even where her own mind cannot yet follow, not abandoning her reason but refusing to make it the only measure. The woman who does not lean on her own understanding alone trusts the Church's authority beyond the limits of her individual judgment, receiving what she cannot yet fully see. Not leaning on your own understanding alone is what trusting before fully understanding requires, refusing to make a woman's individual judgment the sole measure of truth and trusting

an authority wiser and more protected than her own mind, even where her reason cannot yet follow.

CHAPTER FIVE

Seeking to Understand the Teaching

The Reasons Are Usually There

Trusting before fully understanding does not mean remaining content with ignorance, for a woman is called also to seek to understand the hard teaching, to study why the Church teaches it, and she will usually find that the reasons are there and are good, often far richer than she expected. The Church does not teach arbitrarily, and behind her hard teachings lie reasons, wisdom, and a vision of the human person that a woman can come to understand, so that seeking to understand the teaching often transforms it from an arbitrary burden into a recognizable good.

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. — Isaiah 1:18

The Church Does Not Teach Arbitrarily

The Church's hard teachings are not arbitrary rules imposed without reason but flow from a coherent vision of the human person, of love, of the good, so that behind each hard teaching lies reasoning a woman can seek out and come to understand. It is easy to assume that a hard teaching is just an arbitrary rule, a demand without reason, but the Church's teachings, including the hard ones, flow from her understanding of the human person, of God's design, of what truly serves human flourishing and love, so that each has reasons behind it, a rationale rooted in a coherent vision rather than in arbitrary command. This means a woman who finds a teaching arbitrary has usually not yet understood its reasons, which are there to be found, and that seeking them will often reveal a wisdom and a coherence she did not expect, transforming the teaching from an arbitrary burden into a reasoned good. The woman who knows the Church does not teach arbitrarily approaches a hard teaching expecting to find reasons behind it, reasons she can seek out and come to understand. The Church does not teach arbitrarily, for her hard teachings flow from a coherent vision of the human person and of love rather than from arbitrary command, so that behind each lies reasoning a woman can seek out, and finding it often reveals a wisdom she did not expect.

Studying Why

A woman seeking to understand a hard teaching can study why the Church teaches it, reading her explanations, her catechism, the thinkers who have expounded the teaching, and this study often uncovers reasons that illuminate and even commend the teaching she found hard. The reasons behind the Church's teachings are not hidden but available, set out in her catechism, developed by her theologians, explained by her teachers, and a woman who takes the trouble to study why the Church teaches something will usually find a rich body of reasoning, a careful account of why the teaching is true and good, that she can engage and come to understand. This studying of why is the active side of seeking to understand, the taking up of the Church's own explanations to learn the reasons behind the teaching, and it frequently turns a hard teaching into one a woman can see the sense of, even embrace, as understanding grows. The woman who studies why a teaching is given seeks out the reasons behind it, often finding a wisdom that illuminates the teaching she found hard. Studying why is the active side of seeking to understand, taking up the Church's catechism, theologians, and teachers to learn the reasons behind a hard teaching, which often uncovers a wisdom that illuminates and even commends the teaching a woman found difficult.

Understanding That Grows Over Time

Understanding a hard teaching often grows over time, as a woman studies, prays, lives, and matures, so that a teaching she cannot see the sense of now may become clear and even precious later, and patience with the growth of understanding is part of seeking it. Understanding does not always come at once, for some teachings are seen only with time, with more study, more prayer, more life experience, more maturity, so that a woman who cannot yet understand a teaching may come to understand it as she grows, the sense of it dawning gradually rather than all at once. This means seeking to understand is a patient, ongoing work, not a demand for immediate clarity, and a woman can hold a teaching in trust while her understanding grows, confident that what is obscure now may become clear in time as she continues to study, pray, and live. The woman who expects understanding to grow over time holds a hard teaching with patience, seeking understanding as an ongoing work rather than demanding it all at once. Understanding that grows over time is part of seeking it, for a hard teaching whose sense a woman cannot see now may become clear and even precious later as she studies, prays, and matures, so that she holds it in trust with patience while her understanding grows.

CHAPTER SIX

Faithful While You Struggle

When the Will Leads the Heart

A woman may come to accept a hard teaching with her mind and will before her heart and feelings have caught up, and in this gap she is called to be faithful while she struggles, to live the teaching with her will even while her feelings resist, letting the will lead and trusting the heart to follow. This faithfulness in the gap between conviction and feeling is not hypocrisy but integrity, the choosing to live what one believes true even when it is not yet felt, and learning to be faithful while struggling is essential to holding a hard teaching through the long work of the heart's catching up.

Not as I will, but as you will. — Matthew 26:39

The Heart Lags Behind the Will

Often a woman will accept a hard teaching as true and choose to follow it before her feelings agree, so that her heart lags behind her will, still resisting, still desiring otherwise, even as she has decided to be faithful. It is common for conviction to outrun feeling, for a woman to be persuaded that a teaching is true and to resolve to follow it while her emotions have not yet caught up, still pulling against it, still wishing it were otherwise, so that she lives in a gap between what she has chosen and what she feels. This lag of the heart behind the will is normal and not a sign of failure, for the feelings are slower to change than the mind and will, and a woman can be genuinely faithful, having chosen the teaching with her will, while her heart still struggles to follow. The woman who understands that the heart lags behind the will is not discouraged by the gap, knowing that she can be faithful in her will while her feelings slowly catch up. The heart lags behind the will when a woman accepts a hard teaching as true and chooses to follow it before her feelings agree, which is normal and not failure, for the feelings change more slowly than the mind and will, and she can be faithful in her will while her heart still struggles.

Living It With the Will

A woman is faithful to a hard teaching not by waiting until she feels like following it but by living it with her will, choosing to do what she has judged true even while her feelings resist, letting her will and not her feelings govern her conduct. Faithfulness is a matter of the will, of the deliberate choice to do what is right, and so a woman lives a hard teaching by willing to follow it, acting on her conviction rather than her feelings, doing what she has judged true even when she does not feel like it, as Jesus in Gethsemane chose the Father's will over the recoiling of His own heart, not as I will, but as You will. This living it with the will is genuine faithfulness, not hypocrisy, for a woman is not pretending to feel what she does not feel but choosing to do what she believes true despite her feelings,

which is integrity, the aligning of her actions with her convictions. The woman who lives a hard teaching with her will is faithful in the truest sense, governing her conduct by her convictions rather than her feelings. Living it with the will is how a woman is faithful to a hard teaching, choosing to do what she has judged true even while her feelings resist, as Jesus chose the Father's will over His own recoiling heart, so that faithfulness is governed by the will and not by feelings.

Trusting the Heart to Follow

As a woman lives a hard teaching faithfully with her will, her heart often gradually follows, her feelings slowly coming into line with her convictions, so that the obedience of the will over time wins the agreement of the heart. The feelings are not fixed but can change, and often they change precisely through faithful practice, so that a woman who lives a hard teaching with her will, despite her initial resistance, frequently finds her heart gradually catching up, her feelings slowly aligning with what she has chosen, until she comes to feel the rightness she first only willed. This means the gap between will and feeling is not permanent but can close, as faithful living draws the heart after the will, so that a woman can trust that her obedience now, though it feels hard, is forming her feelings and that her heart may in time embrace what her will has chosen. The woman who trusts the heart to follow lives the hard teaching faithfully now, confident that her feelings will often come, over time, into line with her convictions. Trusting the heart to follow is the hope that sustains faithfulness in the gap, for as a woman lives a hard teaching with her will, her feelings often gradually align with her convictions, so that the obedience of the will over time wins the agreement of the heart.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Freedom on the Other Side

When the Hard Teaching Becomes a Gift

The woman who trusts the Church through a hard teaching, working through the struggle to real reception, often discovers a freedom on the other side, finding that the teaching she feared as a burden becomes, when received and lived, a gift, and that trust has led her not into a cage but into a deeper freedom and peace. This is the hidden promise of trusting the Church when it is hard, that beyond the struggle lies not loss but gain, the freedom of a whole and undivided faith and the peace of living in the truth, so that the hard teaching proves in the end to be a gift.

My yoke is easy, and my burden is light. — Matthew 11:30

The Burden That Becomes Light

A hard teaching, feared and resisted as a heavy burden, often becomes light when a woman receives and lives it, so that what she dreaded as a weight proves, on the other side of trust, to be a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light. Jesus promised that His yoke is easy and His burden light, and women who trust the Church through hard teachings frequently find this true, discovering that the teaching they feared as an unbearable weight becomes, once received and lived, far lighter than they imagined, even a source of freedom and peace rather than the burden they dreaded. This transformation of the burden into something light is a common fruit of trust, for the hard teaching, embraced rather than resisted, often turns out to serve a woman's good, to fit the truth of her nature, to free rather than oppress, so that the weight she feared becomes a lightness she could not have anticipated. The woman who finds the burden becoming light discovers that the hard teaching, received and lived, is far lighter than she feared, even a freedom. The burden that becomes light is a common fruit of trusting through a hard teaching, for what a woman dreaded as a heavy weight often proves, once received and lived, to be a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light, serving her good rather than oppressing her.

The Freedom of a Whole Faith

Trusting the Church through hard teachings gives a woman the freedom of a whole and undivided faith, a faith resting securely on the Church's authority rather than fractured by her own picking and choosing, and this wholeness is itself a deep freedom and peace. Where selective faith leaves a woman divided and unstable, forever judging and choosing, trusting the Church through the hard teachings gives her a whole faith, undivided, resting on a firm foundation, freed from the endless burden of being her own final authority over what to believe. This wholeness is a freedom, the freedom of resting securely in a faith she receives rather than one she must constantly construct and defend, the peace of standing on solid ground rather than on the shifting sands of her own preference, so that trusting the Church gives her not a cage but the freedom of a whole and settled faith. The woman who has the freedom of a whole faith rests securely on the Church's authority, freed from the instability and burden of a faith she must piece together herself. The freedom of a whole faith is a gift of trusting the Church through hard teachings, a faith undivided and resting securely on the Church's authority rather than fractured by picking and choosing, so that a woman is freed from the burden of being her own final authority and rests on solid ground.

The Gift Hidden in the Hard Teaching

In the end, the woman who trusts the Church through a hard teaching often discovers that the teaching held a gift all along, a wisdom, a protection, a good for her that she could not see while she feared it, so that trust reveals the hard teaching to have been a gift in disguise. The hard teachings of the Church are not arbitrary impositions but flow from her love and her wisdom, aimed at a woman's true good, and the woman who trusts through the difficulty to real reception frequently finds, on the other side, that the teaching she feared held a genuine gift, a protection of something precious, a path to a good she could not see while she resisted. This discovery, that the hard teaching was a gift in disguise, is the deepest reward of trusting the Church when it is hard, for it reveals that the Church asked the hard thing not to burden a woman but to give her a good, so that her trust is vindicated and the difficulty transformed into gratitude. The woman who finds the gift hidden in the hard teaching sees that her trust led her to a good she could not have reached by resisting, the hard teaching proving to be a gift all along. The gift hidden in the hard teaching is the deepest reward of trusting the Church when it is hard, for the woman who trusts through the difficulty often discovers that the teaching held a wisdom, a protection, a good for her all along, so that trust reveals the hard teaching to have been a gift in disguise.

CONCLUSION

Stay, and Trust

The woman who meets a hard teaching, one that costs her something, now has a way through that is neither rejection nor grudging compliance but honest, faithful trust. We have seen that the hard teaching, not the easy one, reveals and tests her trust; that the quiet temptation of selective faith makes her the final authority and leaves her faith divided; that honest questions are not rejection but the wrestling of a believer seeking to understand; that she can trust before fully understanding, on good reasons; that she can seek to understand the teaching, usually finding the reasons there; that she can be faithful with her will while her heart struggles to follow; and that a freedom waits on the other side, where the hard teaching proves to be a gift.

Through all of it runs a single word: stay. When many turned away from a hard saying, Peter stayed, not because he understood it fully but because he trusted the One who taught it, saying, Lord, to whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life. A woman meeting a hard teaching faces the same choice, to turn away in rejection or quiet selection, or to stay and trust, bringing her questions and her struggles but holding on to

the Church she has good reason to trust. And those who stay discover, in time, that staying was not a cage but a doorway into a deeper freedom.

So when a teaching is hard, stay, and trust. Do not pretend the difficulty away, but do not let it drive you to reject or to quietly set aside what costs you. Bring your honest questions to God and the Church. Trust the Church's authority even where your understanding falls short, as you would trust a doctor you have reason to trust. Seek to understand the teaching, and expect to find reasons there, reasons that may grow clearer over time. Live the teaching faithfully with your will even while your heart struggles to follow, and trust that your heart may yet catch up. And wait for the freedom on the other side, where the hard teaching so often proves to have been a gift. You will meet teachings that are hard. When you do, stay, and trust, for the Church holds the words of eternal life, and trusting her through the hard teaching leads not into a cage but into the freedom of a whole and settled faith.

✦ ✦ ✦

Trusting the Church When It Is Hard is part of The Daily Bread Library.

The Everyday Apostle · everydayapostle.com